

*Hymn: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel***PREFACE**

Recently when reading the old, very old, older than you might think Christmas hymn, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," I suddenly realized how almost perfectly the lyrics apply not just to Christ's *first* coming to earth, but also to His second. In fact, in some stanzas the words seem even more appropriate to Christ's glorious return at the end of the age, rather than His coming to Bethlehem.

STANZA 1

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.*

If Israel yearned, cried out for their promised Messiah in ancient days, how much more so must they now. Since the time they rejected Jesus as the Messiah, nailing Him to the tree, almost two thousand years have passed. And they still wait.

Israel remains, as it were, "captive" to their disappointment, their longing that has become a form of "lonely exile here." No longer captive to the Romans, they remain captive to their stubborn unbelief, their stubborn rejection of the One who came two thousand years ago to *fulfill* their law—to answer it, to complete it, to close the final chapter with "The End."

And as before, when Babylon was the destination, they have exiled *themselves*. Then in their rebellion against a holy God, now in their unbelief, they have done it to themselves.

STANZA 2

*O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.*

If the Jews, as a nation in the first century, had acknowledged Jesus to be the promised Messiah, thousands would have embraced Him as their Savior, thus becoming "free" from "Satan's tyranny." Because they did not, they remained bound in that tyranny.

During the end times—specifically, during the Great Tribulation, the last three-and-a-half years under the rule of the antichrist, the pawn of Satan—it will be an almost hell on earth, and certainly the most visible and horrific demonstration of "Satan's tyranny." During this period many Jews *will* believe in Christ Jesus as their Messiah and Savior, and God will grant them special protection.

Read Hosea 13:14. (KJV)

Read Hosea 13:14. (NASB)

"repentance" = I will not change my mind

"compassion" = I will have no compassion on Death and Sheol

Read Romans 11:25-27.

STANZA 3

*O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.*

For those who have lived through the time of Tribulation, and have placed their trust in Christ Jesus as a result, His coming in triumph and judgment will indeed “cheer [their] spirits.” That puts it mildly.

In the history of the world there will have never been any period to match the gloom and pain and misery of the Tribulation—especially for those who will place their trust in Christ. I will not read it on a day that should be looking toward the approaching Light, but the first chapter of 1 Maccabees, in what we term the Apocrypha, foretells the horror for faithful Jews especially during this period.

In our comfortable complacency we can only imagine the unbridled joy and relief on The Day when the Lord returns to “Disperse the gloomy clouds of night / And death's dark shadows put to flight.”

STANZA 4

*O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.*

In this stanza we hear echoes of two events—two separate occasions when the Lord will “Open wide our heavenly home / Make safe the way that leads on high / And close the path to misery.”

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.

We may not think of our time here on earth as “misery,” but I think when we look back on it (if we even do) from the perspective of paradise in the presence of our Savior, it will seem like wallowing in a pig sty when compared to the glories of heaven.

Seven years after the Rapture the Lord will return—this time to stand on earth in power and majesty to judge. And those who will have been faithful to Christ *during* the Tribulation will be raised to reign with Him.

Read Revelation 20:4.

STANZA 5

*O come, Thou Root of Jesse's tree,
An ensign of Thy people be;
Before Thee rulers silent fall;
All peoples on Thy mercy call.*

In another example of “now—not yet,” we have a familiar passage from Isaiah often heard around Christmas, but which also foretells the time when Christ enjoys absolute, world-wide rule upon the earth after the Tribulation.

Read Isaiah 60:1-4.

STANZA 6

*O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.*

Here in Stanza 6 is the picture of the New Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth under the reign of the Lord God and His Christ.

Read Revelation 21:22-27.

The description of the New Jerusalem concludes with this glorious picture of what it will be like living with the Lord.

Read Revelation 22:1-5.

The hymn's refrain, or chorus, is an encouraging promise:

REFRAIN

*Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Emmanuel came to them the first time and they rejected Him. But Israel still holds a special place in God's heart; they remain His chosen people. They will not be forgotten in the final days, and believing Israel will hold an exalted position in the Millennial Kingdom.

God keeps His promises: Emmanuel *did* come to thee, O Israel, and Emmanuel *shall* come to thee, O Israel.